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EXAMINER				
TIMBLIN, ROBERT M				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/763,182

Applicant(s)

MATSUNO ET AL.

Examiner

ROBERT TIMBLIN

Art Unit

2167

Period for Reply -- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 14 October 2008.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) See Continuation Sheet is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) See Continuation Sheet is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

Continuation of Disposition of Claims: Claims pending in the application are 1,3-7,19-21,25,27-31,44,46,48,50,52,54,56,58,60,62-66,77-79,81,83-88,100,103,105,111,113,116,119 and 121.

Continuation of Disposition of Claims: Claims rejected are 1,3-7,19-21,25,27-31,44,46,48,50,52,54,56,58,60,62-66,77-79,81,83-88,100,103,105,111,113,116,119 and 121.

DETAILED ACTION

This office action corresponds to application 10/763,182 filed 1/26/2004.

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 10/14/2008 has been entered.

Response to Amendment

Applicant's amendments have been entered. In the amendment filed herein:

Claims 1, 19, 25, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62, 77, 83, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, and 121 have been amended.

No claims have been cancelled.

Accordingly, claims 1, 3-7, 19-21, 25, 27-31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-66, 77-79, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, and 121 are pending.

Claim Objections

The previous objections have been withdrawn in light of the correcting amendments. However, upon further examination:

Claims 119 and 121 are objected to because these claims recite a processor-readable medium for providing/managing, however, it is unclear how the medium *per se* would accomplish these tasks. In particular, these claims appear to be missing the recitation of the medium storing program code or instructions to perform the recited tasks.

Appropriate correction is required.

35 USC § 101

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Claims 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 100, 103, 105, 111, and 113 are rejected under section 101 as reciting improper method claims. In particular, these claims recite a method (process) while lacking necessary language (e.g. the recitation of hardware) to tie the method to a statutory category (i.e. a particular apparatus in accordance with MPEP 2106.IV.B) of invention.

Under recent court decisions (e.g. see *In re Diamond v. Diehr*; *Parker v. Flook*; *Gottschalk v. Benson*; *Cochrane v. Deener*) the Office's guidance is that a 101 process must (1) be tied to another statutory class (such as a particular apparatus) or (2) transform underlying subject matter (such as an article or materials) to a different state or thing. The present method claims do not pass either prong of the "machine or transformation test" and accordingly may be accomplished purely by mental steps and therefore are not statutory.

In order for the method claims to be statutory they should *positively* recite the other statutory class (e.g. by identifying the apparatus that accomplishes the method steps) that the method is tied to as to impose meaningful limits on the claim's scope and to impart patent-eligibility. Furthermore, the apparatus used in the claims must clearly purport to a hardware apparatus. Currently, the apparatus in these claims may be seen as a software apparatus as the apparatus is not limited to hardware embodiments.

The previous 35 U.S.C. 101 rejections have been withdrawn. In light of the amendments and the present disclosure, the Examiner submits that the computer readable medium (supported by page 53 lines 4-6 as a hardware recording medium) as well as the processor (supported by page 53 line 15 as a CPU unit) included in the respective claims suffice as statutory subject matter.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 1, 3-7, 19-21, 25, 27-31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-66, 77-79, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, and 121 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by McFadden (U.S. Patent Application

2003/0126137). In the cited paragraphs, figures and drawing references, McFadden teaches:

Claim 1 and similar claim 44: A merge information providing apparatus comprising:

a processor (61);

and a computer readable medium (62) storing processor-executable instructions, wherein when the instructions (0053) are executed by the processor (61), said merge information providing apparatus includes

a plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) a plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) regarding a plurality of users (0015), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers);

means for receiving (0221) an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding said designated user (0015, members that meet

the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) in response to said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), said plurality of user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045); and

means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 3 and similar claim 27: The merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said means for acquiring only designated user information items acquires said designated user (0042) information items regarding said designated user from each of said plurality of user information providing means by using first use permission information (0012, using an access control list) that permits the use of each of said plurality of user information providing means (paragraph 0064).

Claim 4 and similar claim 28: The merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein, when the instructions are executed by the processor, said merge information providing apparatus further comprises use permission information acquisition means for acquiring said first use permission information from each of said plurality of user information providing means (figures 5 and 8 and 0069; hub or spoke administrator authorization).

Claim 5 and similar claim 29: The merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein, when the instructions are executed by the processor, said merge information providing apparatus further comprises use permission information creation means for creating second use permission information that permits the use of said merge user information providing apparatus (0069-0073).

Claim 6 and similar claim 30: The merge information providing apparatus of the claim 5, wherein said use permission information creation means creates said second use permission information including said first use permission information by using said first use permission information (0030, 0178 and 0245).

Claim 7 and similar claims 31, 66, and 87: The merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein, when the instructions are executed by the processor, said merge information providing apparatus further comprises means for setting up each of said plurality of user information providing means according to a request (0060, 0062, 0067 and figure 5; creating a spoke).

Claim 19: An information providing apparatus comprising:

a processor (61);

and a computer readable medium (62) storing processor-executable instructions, wherein when the instructions (0053) are executed by the processor (61), said merge information providing apparatus includes

a merge user information providing apparatus (12) that includes

means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) a plurality of different information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) that have been merged into a single information item (38, 36; e.g. group record) in response to a request (0010, 0015;

e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032); and

a plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records), for providing a plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) regarding a plurality of users that are subordinate (e.g. spokes used by a user) to said means for providing said plurality of different information items (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045), said plurality of different information items (0032, figure 7 and 0045) regarding said designated user (0015) that have been merged into said single information item only including designated user information items regarding said designated user acquired from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users from each of said plurality of user information providing means (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record),

wherein each of said plurality of user information providing means for providing the plurality of user information items regarding the plurality of users (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) communicates with said means for providing the plurality of different information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) regarding the designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) that have been merged into the single information item in response to the request (e.g. requested update), and

wherein said means for providing the plurality of different information items regarding the designated user that have been merged into the single information item

(38, 36; e.g. group record) in response to the request (e.g. requested update) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 20 : The information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 19, wherein, when the instructions are executed by the processor, said information providing means further comprises means for saving said plurality of different information items regarding said user (0003, 0030-0032, and figures 3 and 7; user records).

Claim 21: The information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 19, wherein said plurality of different information items regarding said user includes user information and/or group information of a group to which said user belongs, and wherein said group information includes user information and/or group information of at least one of said plurality of user information providing means (0029, 0064, and figure 9).

Claim 25: A managing apparatus, comprising:
a merge information providing apparatus (12) including
a processor (61);
and a computer readable medium (62) storing processor-executable instructions, wherein when the instructions (0053) are executed by the processor (61), said merge information providing apparatus includes

a plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) a plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) regarding a plurality of users (0015), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers);

means for transmitting a setup request (0010 and 0045; e.g. addition of a new user record) regarding a set up of each of said plurality of a plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) a plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) regarding a plurality of users (0015), and

means for acquiring only designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding said designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) in response to said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), said plurality of user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers)

communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 44: A merge information providing method in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), only designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding the designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), said plurality of user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045); and

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30), in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers)

communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 46: An information providing method in a user information providing apparatus, said user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items, means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, said method comprising:

providing, in response to a request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) from a merge user information providing apparatus (12) that includes said user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) providing means and a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items (38, 46, 0064) regarding a plurality of users (0015), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may

be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...” between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), a plurality of different information items regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) to said merge user information providing apparatus, said plurality of different information items (0032, figure 7 and 0045) regarding said designated user only including designated user information items regarding said designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) acquired from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users from each of said plurality of user information providing means, the designated user being designated by a user ID, said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045)

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 48: A managing method in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items a plurality of means for providing a plurality of information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding the designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46,

0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), said plurality of user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045);

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30), in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record); and

transmitting a set up request for said plurality of user information items providing means (0045),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 50 : A computer-implemented method for providing merge information in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items, a plurality of means for providing a plurality of information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items said method comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding said designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46,

0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), said plurality of user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045); and

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30), in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 52: A computer-implemented method of providing information in a user information providing apparatus, said user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items a means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, said method comprising:

providing, in response to a request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) from a merge user information providing apparatus (12) that includes said user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) providing means (e.g. user record) and a plurality of means for (38, 46, 0064) providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), a plurality of different information items regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) to said merge user information providing apparatus (12), the designated user being designated by a user ID, said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups, said plurality of different information items regarding said designated user only including

designated user information items regarding said designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) acquired from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 54: A computer-implemented method of managing information in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items said method comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items, (0015, member identifiers) regarding the designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) in response to said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), said plurality of user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045);

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30), in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38,

46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record); and

transmitting a set up request for said plurality of user information items providing means(0045),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 56: A processor-readable medium storing program code that includes processor-executable instructions for providing merge information in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users and means for merging said acquired

designated user information items, wherein said instructions, when executed by said processor, cause said processor to perform a method comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items, only designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding the designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), said plurality of user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045); and

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30), in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), said acquired designated user information items (0015,

member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 58: A processor-readable medium that includes processor-executable instructions for providing information in a user information providing apparatus, said user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items, a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, wherein said

instructions, when executed by said processor, cause said processor to perform a method comprising:

providing, in response to a request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) from a merge user information providing apparatus (12) that includes said user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) providing means (e.g. user record) and a plurality of means for (38, 46, 0064) providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), a plurality of different information items regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) to said merge user information providing apparatus (12), the designated user being designated by a user ID, said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups, said plurality of different information items regarding said designated user only including designated user information items regarding said designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) acquired from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 60: A processor-readable medium storing program code that stores processor-executable instructions for managing information in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items, a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, wherein said instructions, when executed by said processor, cause said processor to perform a method comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users

(0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items, only designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding the designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), said plurality of user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045);

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record); and

transmitting a set up request for said plurality of user information items providing means(0045),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 62: A merge information providing apparatus comprising:

a processor (61);

and a computer readable medium (62) storing processor-executable instructions, wherein when the instructions (0053) are executed by the processor (61), said merge information providing apparatus includes

a plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) a plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) regarding a plurality of users (0015), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user

characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers);

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

means for acquiring a first designated user information item (0042; e.g. a user membership record in a particular spoke) regarding a designated user registered to a first one of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) of which use is permitted from among a said plurality of user information items, the designated user being designated by a user ID, said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045);

means for acquiring only a second designated user information item regarding the same said designated user registered to second one of said plurality user information item providing means (0009, 0013, and 0042; e.g. a user membership record in another particular spoke or group) from among said plurality of user information items, without distinguishing said designated user as to whether or not the use of said second one of said plurality user information item providing means is permitted; and

means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032) communicates with said means for acquiring only the first designated user information item (0042; e.g. a user membership record in a particular spoke) and said means for acquiring only the second designated user information item (0009, 0013, and 0042; e.g. a user membership record in another particular spoke or group),

wherein said means for acquiring only the first designated user information item (0042), said means for acquiring only the second designated user information item (0009, 0013, and 0042; e.g. a user membership record in another particular spoke or group), and said means for merging communicate with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user, and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 63: The merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 62, wherein, when the instructions are executed by the processor, said merge information providing apparatus further comprises:

means for managing distinction information that distinguishes said designated user registered to at least one of said plurality user information providing means from the rest of said plurality of users (0015 and 0032).

Claim 64: The merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 63, wherein said distinction information managing means provides said distinction information of said designated user to at least one of said first or second designated user information acquisition means in response to a request from said at least one of said first or second designated user information acquisition means (0056, identifying group membership).

Claim 65: The merge information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 62, wherein said first and second designated user information acquisition means acquires said first and second designated user information items regarding said designated user from said first and second ones of said plurality of user information providing means by using permission information that permits the use of said distinction information and said first and second ones of said plurality of user information providing means (0069, drawing reference 218).

Claim 77: An information providing apparatus comprising:

a processor (61);

and a computer readable medium (62) storing processor-executable instructions, wherein when the instructions (0053) are executed by the processor (61), said merge information providing apparatus includes

means for providing only designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding said designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) in response to said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), said plurality of user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045), said designated user information providing means corresponding to a distinction information that distinguishes said designated user registered to said designated user information (0015 and 0032) providing means and/or registered to a plurality of means for providing said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users providing means to a merge user information providing apparatus in response to a

request from said merge user information providing apparatus (12), said merge user information providing apparatus (12) including means for receiving an acquisition request (application 54), said designated user information items providing means and other said plurality of means for providing said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records), and merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 78: The information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 77, wherein, when the instructions are executed by the processor, said information providing

apparatus further comprises: means for saving said designated information items regarding said designated user (0003, 0030-0032, and figures 3 and 7; user records).

Claim 79: The information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 77, wherein said designated information items regarding said designated user includes user information and/or group information of a group to which said designated user belongs, said group information including designated user information and/or group information of at least one of said plurality of user information providing means (0029, 0064, and figure 9).

Claim 81 : The information providing apparatus as claimed in claim 78, wherein said designated user information items providing means further comprises means for saving said designated user information regarding said designated user (0003, 0030-0032, and figures 3 and 7; user records).

Claim 83: A managing apparatus, comprising: a processor; and a computer readable medium storing processor-executable instructions, wherein when the instructions are executed by the processor, said managing apparatus includes

a merge information providing apparatus (12) including a plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) a plurality of user information (0032, e.g. member identifiers) regarding a plurality of users (0015), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records

may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...) between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers);

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

means for transmitting information regarding set up of said plurality of user information items providing means (figure 1 and 0045); and

means for acquiring only designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding said designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) in response to said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), said plurality of user information items including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045), said designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) being registered to other at least two of said plurality of user information providing means (e.g. a user registered to two spokes) without distinguishing (0081, 38) the designated user by the user information providing means of which use is permitted, said merge information providing

apparatus merging said acquired different designated user information items regarding said designated user (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) into a single merged designated user item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 84: The managing apparatus as claimed in claim 83, wherein, when the instructions are executed by the processor, said managing apparatus further comprises means for managing distinction information that distinguishes whether said designated user is registered to at least one of said plurality of user information providing means (0056).

Claim 85: The managing apparatus as claimed in claim 84, wherein said distinction information managing means provides said distinction information of said designated user to said user information acquisition means in response to a request from said user information acquisition means (0056, identifying group membership).

Claim 86: The managing apparatus as claimed in claim 84, wherein said user information acquisition means acquires said designated user information items (0042) regarding said designated user from said plurality of user information providing means by using permission information that permits the use of said distinction information and said plurality of user information providing means (0069, drawing reference 218).

Claim 88: The managing apparatus as claimed in claim 83, wherein, when the instructions are executed by the processor, said managing apparatus

further comprises means for displaying a screen for setting up said merge information providing apparatus and said plurality of user information providing means (0050).

Claim 100: A merge user information providing method in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items, a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items

regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0015), from among said plurality of user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding said plurality of users, only a plurality of different information items regarding the designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) registered to at least one of said plurality of user information item providing means of which use is permitted, said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045), said designated user being registered to at least two of the plurality of user information items providing means without distinguishing said user by whether or not the use of said user information items providing means is permitted (0032, figure 7 and 0045); and

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30), in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 103: An information providing method in a user information providing apparatus, said user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items a

plurality of means for providing a plurality of information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, comprising the step of:

providing in response to a request from a merge user information providing apparatus (fig. 1), said merge user information providing apparatus (12) including said plurality of user information items providing means, said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), a plurality of different information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users, the designated user being designated by a user ID, said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045), said designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) corresponding to distinction information registered to at least one of said plurality of user information items providing means for distinguishing said user to said merge user information providing apparatus (figure 1).

Claim 105: A managing method in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (0054) only designated user information items (0015), from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users, only a plurality of different information items regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) registered to at least one of said plurality of user information item providing means of which use is permitted, said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), the designated user being designated by a user ID, said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups, said

designated user registered to at least two of the plurality of user information items providing means without distinguishing said user by whether or not the use of said user information items providing means is permitted (0032, figure 7 and 0045);

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30), in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), said acquired plurality of different user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding said designated user into a single merged designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record); and

transmitting a request regarding setup of said plurality of user information items providing means (0045),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 111: A computer-implemented information providing method in a user information providing apparatus, said user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, comprising the step of:

providing only, in response to a request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) from a merge user information providing apparatus (fig. 1, #12), said merge user information providing apparatus (12) including V of different information items regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users, the designated user being designated by a user ID, said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032), said designated user corresponding to distinction information registered to at least one of said plurality of user information items providing means and/or other user information items providing mean for distinguishing said user to said merge user information providing apparatus (0032, figure 7 and 0045),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 113: A computer-implemented managing method in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items, a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0015), from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users, only a plurality of different information items regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) registered to at least one of said plurality of user information item providing means of which use is permitted, said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users (abstract, 0015) including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups, said designated user being registered to at least two of the plurality of user information items providing means without distinguishing said user by whether or not the use of said user information items providing means is permitted (abstract, 0015);

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30), in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record); and

transmitting a request regarding setup of said plurality of user information items providing means (0045).

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 116: A processor-readable medium storing a program code for providing merge user information in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0015), from among said plurality of user information items regarding said plurality of users, only a plurality of different information items regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) registered to at least one of said plurality of user information item providing means of which use is permitted (e.g. a user registered at a spoke computer/domain), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), the designated user being designated by a user ID, said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups, said designated user being registered to at least two of the plurality of user information items providing means without distinguishing said user by whether or not the use of said user information items providing means is permitted (0032, figure 7 and 0045); and

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30), in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records

thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers), said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38, 46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record)

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 119: A processor-readable medium for providing information in a user information providing apparatus, said user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users,

and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, comprising the step of:

providing only, in response to a request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) from a merge user information providing apparatus (fig. 1, #12), said merge user information providing apparatus (12) including said plurality of user information items providing means (figure 1, 16, 14), said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), a plurality of different information items regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) from among said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users, the designated user being designated by a user ID, said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups, said designated user corresponding to distinction information registered to at least one of said plurality of user information items providing means and/or other user information items providing mean for distinguishing said user to said merge user information providing apparatus (0032, figure 7 and 0045),

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers)

communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Claim 121: A processor-readable medium for managing information in a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including means for receiving an acquisition request, means for acquiring only designated user information items, said merge user information providing apparatus including a plurality of means for providing a plurality of user information items regarding a plurality of users, and means for merging said acquired designated user information items, comprising the steps of:

receiving an acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user) relating to a designated user of the plurality of users (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion), the designated user being designated by a user ID (0032);

acquiring, in said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0015), from among said plurality of user information items (0015, member identifiers) regarding said plurality of users, only a plurality of different information items regarding a designated user (0015, members that meet the group membership criterion) registered to at least one of said plurality of user information item providing means of which use is permitted, said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke...") between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers), the designated user being designated by a user ID, said plurality of information items regarding said plurality of users including user IDs, user names, user passwords, group IDs, group names, or membership of groups (0032, figure 7 and 0045), said designated user being registered to at least two of the plurality of user information items providing means without distinguishing said user by whether or not the use of said user information items providing means is permitted (0032, figure 7 and 0045); and

merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30), in said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30; e.g. a computer system for storing a collection of records thus merged from spoke computers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) said acquired designated user information items (0015, member identifiers) from each of said plurality of user information providing means (38,

46, 0064) into a single designated user information item (0045; e.g. updating a users' memberships in their record).

transmitting a request regarding setup of said plurality of user information items providing means (0045)

wherein each of said plurality of means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers) communicates with said means for acquiring (application 54) only designated user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers),

wherein said means for acquiring (application 54) and said means for merging (fig. 1, drawing references 12 and 30) communicate (0050) with said means for receiving said acquisition request (0010, 0015; e.g. update of a dynamic group with the inclusion of a new user), and

wherein said means for receiving said acquisition request (0221) communicates with a web browser (0022; e.g. a user-interface component) via a network (20, 0036, 0051).

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 10/14/2008 ('reply') have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant has specifically added in the claims the limitation recited to where said information items are different between each of said means for providing said plurality of user information items. This limitation is argued as lacking in the McFadden reference (e.g. see pages 42-44 of the reply). The Examiner disagrees given the following.

In accordance with the foregoing rejection in view of McFadden, the Examiner submits that the argued limitation is taught by McFadden accordingly:

"...said user information items being different (0032; e.g. distinguishing user characteristics, 0042; e.g. "...user records may be completely different and correspond, for example, to only those users that are managed by the particular spoke..." between each of said means for providing (38, 46, 0064; e.g. user records) said plurality of user information items (0032, e.g. member identifiers)..." (see, for example, rejection to claim 1 pertaining to this feature).

That is, under current interpretation of the McFadden reference as applied to the current invention, McFadden teaches user records as a means for providing a plurality of information items (i.e. a user record may contain user identifiers (information items) as specified by McFadden's paragraph 0032). With this interpretation, the Examiner respectfully submits that a user record may be seen as different from another user record and therefore each of the information items in one user record may be different

from the user items in another record. Accordingly, the argument to this limitation (which states that the synchronization of hub and spoke records teaches *identical* information rather than the difference in the user records themselves) is not found as persuasive. Examiner further does not concede that all the spoke computers in McFadden include the same (identical) user information. As taught by McFadden (e.g. 0042) user records may correspond only to a particular spoke computer, domain, or enterprise within such spoke computer.

Examiner further submits that the additional amendments have been addressed accordingly by McFadden and therefore arguments pertaining thereto are rendered moot.

Contact Information

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to ROBERT TIMBLIN whose telephone number is (571)272-5627. The examiner can normally be reached on M-Th 8:00-4:30.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John R. Cottingham can be reached on 571-272-7079. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/ROBERT TIMBLIN/

Examiner, Art Unit 2167

/John R. Cottingham/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 2167